RULES FOR THE DIRECTION OF THE NATURAL INTELLIGENCE

BOOK ONE

ON SIMPLE PROPOSITIONS AND INFERENCES

Rule One

On Wisdom and Science

The goal of studies should be the direction of the natural intelligence[1] *toward the formation of solid and true judgments about all the things that occur to it.*

1. It is a habit of human beings that, whenever they recognize some similarity between two things, they judge of the one what they have found to be true of the other, even in that respect in which the two are different. Thus, wrongly comparing the sciences, which consist entirely of knowledge possessed by the mind, with the arts, which demand a certain application and habituation of the body, and seeing that the same human being cannot simultaneously master all the arts, but that someone who practices only one art develops more easily into an excellent craftsman – since the same hands cannot adapt as conveniently to cultivating the land and to playing the harp or to several different tasks of this kind as to only one of them –, they have also believed the same about the sciences. And, distinguishing them from each other by the diversity of their objects, they have thought that the sciences have to be studied individually, each one separately and after all the others have been omitted. But they are surely mistaken about this. For, since all the sciences are nothing other than human wisdom, which always remains one and the same, however applied to different subjects, and which derives no greater distinction from them than the light of the sun does from the variety of the things on which it shines, there is no need to constrain the natural intelligence

[1] On the distinction between the translation of 'ingenium' in the 'facultative' sense as '*the* natural intelligence' and in the 'functional' sense as 'natural *intelligence*' cf. the other contexts of the text, namely, R. 1, § 1 (2x), R. 2, R. 2, §§ 3 and 5, R. 3, §§ 1, 2, and 9 (2x), R. 4, §§ 1 (2x) and 3–5 (3x in 5), R. 6, § 6 (2x), R. 7, §§ 1 and 4, R. 8, §§ 2, 5 (2x), 8, and 11 (4x), R. 9, R. 9, §§ 1, 2, and 4, R. 10, R. 10, §§ 1–3 (2x in 2), R. 11, R. 11, §§ 2 and 4–5, R. 12, §§ 10 (2x), 20, 23 (3x), 25, and 27 (2x), R. 13, §§ 5 and 8–10, R. 14, §§ 1 and 14, and R. 16, §§ 2 and 6. Perhaps '[the] natural intelligence' is such a fitting translation of 'ingenium' because Descartes' main aim in the *Rules* is to show that and how the artificial, in the form of method (or of rules thereof), can improve upon the natural, in the form of intelligence – cf., e.g., R. 9, § 4, where, in conjunction with R. 6, §§ 1 and 5, it becomes clear that the word 'art' itself can be, but, of course, does not have to be, just another word for 'method'.

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ullis cohibere; neque enim nos unius veritatis cognitio, veluti unius artis usus, ab alterius inventione dimovet, sed potius juvat. Et profecto mirum mihi videtur, plerosque hominum plantarum vires,[3] siderum motus, metallorum transmutationes, similiumque disciplinarum objecta diligentissime perscrutari, atque interim fere nullos de bona mente, sive de hac universali[4] Sapientia, cogitare, cum tamen alia omnia non tam propter se, quam quia ad hanc aliquid conferunt, sint aestimanda. Ac proinde non immerito hanc regulam primam omnium proponimus, quia nihil prius a recta quaerendae veritatis via nos abducit,[5] quam si non ad hunc finem generalem, sed ad aliquos particulares studia dirigamus. Non de perversis loquor et damnandis, ut sunt inanis gloria vel lucrum turpe: ad hos enim perspicuum est fucatas rationes, et vulgi ingeniis accommoda-
[361] ta ludibria, longe magis compen|diosum iter aperire, quam possit solida veri cognitio. Sed de honestis etiam intelligo et laudandis, quia ab his decipimur saepe subtilius; ut si quaeramus scientias utiles ad vitae commoda, vel ad illam voluptatem, quae in veri contemplatione reperitur, et quae fere unica est integra et nullis turbata doloribus in hac vita felicitas. Hos enim scientiarum fructus legitimos possumus quidem exspectare; sed, si de illis inter studendum cogitemus, saepe efficiunt, ut multa, quae ad aliarum rerum cognitionem necessaria sunt, vel quia prima fronte parum utilia, vel quia parum

[3] A, C, and SGZ: plerosque hominum plantarum vires. H: plerosque hominum corpora, plantarum vires. L and AT: plerosque hominum mores, plantarum vires. N (clause): ik ben verwondert van dat de meeste menschen zeer naerstiglijk de krachten der planten.
[4] A, AT, and C: universali. H: universali me. L: universalissima. N: algemeene.
[5] H, AT, C, and SGZ: abducit. A: abduxit.

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